



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: A CLOSER LOOK

Prevention starts with understanding

By now most are aware of child sexual abuse, but do we really understand it's severity and how prominent it is in our society?

Recent research has shown us child sexual abuse is likely the most prevalent health problem children face with the most serious array of consequences as 1 and 10 children will be abused by their 18th birthday. Unfortunately many of them will never disclose that abuse. In 2000, nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults (including assaults

on adults) occurred to children ages 17 and under. So who are the abusers? Most of them look and act like everyone else. Abusers can be found in families, schools, churches, recreation centers, youth sports leagues and any other places children gather. A recent study by the Durham, NH Crimes Against Children Research Center found that 90% of abused children they studied knew

their abuser. Of those 90%, 30% of those were family members and 60% were someone the family trusts.

Much of this abuse begins by "grooming" where the offender draws a victim in while at the same time filling roles within the victims' family that make he or she



trusted and valued. Some of those behaviors include special attention by taking the child on outings or offering gifts. If you suspect anyone near the family is not acting right trust your gut and say something. While abuse can happen to any child, there are child and family characteristics that heighten a child's risk. The most important being family structure. According to US Department of

Health and Human Services, children who live with two married biological parents are at low risk. Children who live in foster homes are 10 times more likely to be abused while children who live with a single parent that has a live in partner are at the highest risk: they are 20 times more

likely to be abused than those who live with both biological parents. Age is perhaps the most telling factor in sexual abuse. Research indicates most children are vulnerable to abuse between the ages of seven and thirteen with nine being the median age. Once the abuse happens several immediate consequences begin to emerge, such as emotional and mental health issues. Children who are sexually abused are at a significantly great risk for later posttraumatic stress and other anxiety

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Archdiocese of Louisville

Volume VII Issue I

October 2018

If you need support or someone to talk to:

- ☉ Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana: 800.CHILDREN/800.422.4453 www.pcaky.org www.pcaain.org
- ☉ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 800.4.A.CHILD 800.422.4453 www.childhelp.org

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts/mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Sudden/unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is unusual for the child's age.

CLOSER LOOK (cont.)

symptoms, depression and suicide attempts, all of which can have lasting effects well into adulthood.

You can learn more about child sexual abuse and what you can do by attending one of the Archdiocese of Louisville's "Honor Thy Children" Safe Environment Trainings. For a complete schedule of trainings visit www.archlou.org/safe

Again, it's important to act early should you suspect any abuse. Always

"trust your gut" and report. Remember, Kentucky is a mandatory reporting state. To report abuse call 1-877-KYSAFE1 or 1-877-597-2331 (Toll-Free). Should you have questions concerning abuse, please feel free to reach out to Martine Siegel, Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance Coordinator at 502.636.1044 or via email (msiegel@archlou.org)

Every 8 minutes,

child protective services substantiates, or finds evidence for, a claim of child sexual abuse.

RAINN

National Sexual Assault Hotline | 800.656.HOPE | online.rainn.org
Please visit rainn.org/statistics/children-and-teens for full citation.¹

Helping children understand that they have the right to "Tell people 'NO!'" if anyone tries to hurt them or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable is an important, though sometimes a difficult, task. But establishing boundaries around touch is integral to keeping kids safe. Below are some examples courtesy of the Nation Center for Missing and Exploited Children to help guide children and other adults when setting the norms and boundaries.

Remind children that their bodies are their own. - It's never too early to start talking about consent. If your children don't feel comfortable giving hugs, sitting on laps, or are uncomfortable with another type of touch, encourage them to speak up and tell people "no".

Keep the adults in your child's life in the loop. - Many friends or family members may not think twice before picking up your children, giving them hugs, or otherwise showing their affection. Let adults in your child's life know that you are working on these skills and strategies. Suggest alternative options for showing affection if your child expresses discomfort, such as "How about a high five instead of a hug?"

SETTING THE PHYSICAL BOUNDRIES

UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated.

11.5.18

Ascension School

11.8.18

St. Xavier High School

11.12.18

*St. John the Baptist
(Elizabethtown)*

More trainings are being scheduled for December and January.

Keep checking

www.archlou.org/safe for updates as trainings cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted here

Are you Safe Environment compliant?



Field trip coming up?
The winter sports season is near!
Maybe a coach?

Don't wait until the last minute!

Anyone that has regular contact with children **MUST** have attended the Archdiocese of Louisville's Safe Environment Training and have completed a background check within the last 5 years. If you are unsure of your status please contact your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator!



CHILD VICTIMS: HOW TO LISTEN

"A child just told me they were abused. Now what?" Having children come to us saying they were sexually abused is something many may not be prepared for. What would you do? First and foremost is ALWAYS report. Kentucky is a mandatory re-

porting state. To report suspected abuse call **1-877-KYSAFE1** or **1-877-597-2331 (Toll-Free)**.

Next always BELIEVE the child. Children, especially young ones

rarely make up stories about abuse and when disclosing for the first time do it accidentally. Always remember it is not your job to investigate. Your priority is the child's safety.

Remember to always remain calm. Children who disclose often look to you as a source of comfort. They need someone who is willing to simply listen without being overly emotional. It is already difficult for the child coming forward as they have very little knowledge or understanding of sexual activity other than fear and it's compounded when it is most likely a family member or friend of the

family. Remember your response could have a big impact their ability to trust others and talk about the abuse. Guilt may start to set in as well. Re-assure the child they are doing the right thing. Also, don't make promises you can't keep.



Sit down and talk to the child when the suspected abuser is not present. Abusers tend to manipulate their victims with feelings of guilt and confuse them

about right and wrong. This confuses victims as to what is right or wrong. As adults it is our responsibility to protect our children from sexual abuse. Many children, no matter how comfortable you think they are, may feel too frightened, embarrassed or angry to report abuse. Take time to be aware of the adults your child interacts with on a regular basis and always be prepared to discuss uncomfortable issues with your child. More importantly don't be afraid to ask for help!

"The sacredness of life, honoured in our religious traditions, grounds our belief in the ultimate meaning and value of the child. This sacredness of life compels us to be a voice of conscience.

If we fail to protect the child, we deny our humanity, risk our future and betray our beliefs"

**Religions for Peace Executive Committee Statement
on Commitment to Eliminate Violence against Children**

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

Late fall isn't just a time when the temps get cooler, schedules get busier and there is sometimes the rush to get things wrapped up ahead of holiday breaks.

Now is the time to look ahead and see if you will be called upon to volunteer in the future. If so, will you be required to be safe environment compliant?

Don't wait until the last minute to complete your background check or attend a Safe Environment Training

This time of year events such as inclement weather can postpone trainings and you don't want to be left waiting on a rescheduled training.

If you're unsure of your status, reach out to your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator. If don't know who this is contact:

Scott Fitzgerald
Coordinator of Safe Environment Services via email
(fitzgerald@archlou.org)
or phone (502) 471.2132



**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

Martine Bacci Siegel, MSN, RN, CNS
Maloney Center
1200 South Shelby Street
Louisville, KY 40220

Phone: 502.636.1044
Fax: 502.634.3381
E-mail: msiegel@archlou.org

No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

REVICTIMIZATION: THERE IS HELP

Revictimization means that a victim may experience abuse again at another time in their life. People who experience childhood sexual abuse are two to three times more likely to experience abuse as adults. What can someone do if they feel they are experiencing revictimization? It's important to find help as soon as they can. Many times victims feel talking about child sexual abuse is taboo. Some can feel cut off when looking for support from family,



friends and even those in their community and this makes it harder to feel well again. If you or someone you know isn't sure where to turn, feel free to reach out to Martine Siegel, Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance Coordinator who can help direct them to the right resources (502.636.1044 or msiegel@archlou.org) Always remember it's never too late to find help.

Treatment for adult survivors may help:

- Overcome troubling thoughts and feelings, like self-blame, guilt or low self-esteem
- Overcome unhelpful coping strategies, like self-harm or eating problems
- Build healthy skills, like building trust and setting healthy boundaries in relationships
- Treatment should also address any other mental health or substance use problems, so it will look different for everyone.